DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 191 535 JC 800 504

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TITLE Follow-Up Study on Those Enrolled in a "Study Unlimited" Data Processing Course.
INSTITUTION Black Hawk Coll., Moline, Ill.
PUB DATE [80]
NOTE 19p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Students: Community Colleges: *Cooperative Programs: *Data Processing: Educational Media: Flexible Scheduling: Introductory Courses: Nonmajors: *Nontraditional Education: Nontraditional Students: Public Libraries: Questionnaires: *Student Characteristics: Student Educational Objectives: Two Year Colleges

ABSTRACT

A survey of the 49 students who had enrolled in a self-paced, variable-entry data processing course offered by Black Hawk College (BHC) in cooperation with area public libraries was conducted to determine whether the course was serving the students for whom it was intended, that is, non-major, adult students who were employed full-time and for whom a traditional class on campus was not a viable alternative. The students, who had enrolled between January and July 1980, were asked to indicate their age, employment status, past experience at BHC, educational background, reasons for enrolling, the likelihood of attending sections of the same class on campus, and their educational plans with regard to other data processing courses and "Study Unlimited." Survey findings, based on 33 responses, indicate that most of the students had a non-traditional profile: 68.8% were between the ages of 23 and 55: 73.3% were employed full-time: 46.9% had completed some previous college work: and 62.1% were taking the course for job-related reasons. In addition, the study revealed that 62.8% had enrolled because of the time flexibility incorporated in the course, and 56.3% responded that they would never have taken the course in a traditional classroom. The survey report provides summary conclusions and the questionnaire. (JP)

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ED191535

FOLLOW-UP STUDY ON THOSE ENROLLED IN A "STUDY UNLIMITED" DATA PROCESSING COURSE

by

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Abstract

FOLLOW-UP STUDY ON THOSE ENROLLED IN A "STUDY UNLIMITED" DATA PROCESSING COURSE

by Mary A. Stevens, Ed.D., Black Hawk College, Moline, Illinois

"Study Unlimited" is a cooperative program of Black Hawk College, Moline, Illinois, the River Bend Library System, Coal Valley, Illinois, and participating public libraries. Most courses available in the program are offered by means of instructional technology and are self-paced and variable-entry. All courses parallel existing college-credit courses on campus and have been developed and are taught by regular full-time college faculty. The purpose of this follow-up study was to determine whether or not a new introductory course in data processing in "Study Unlimited" was serving the students for whom it was intended: non-majors, especially adults employed full-time who wished to learn more about computers and data processing and for whom enrollment in a traditional class on campus was not a viable alternative.

The 49 students who initially enrolled in the course were asked to complete a simple survey form; 33 responded. The results indicated that students enrolled in the "Study Unlimited" course were significantly different from the traditional college student: 68.8% were between the ages of 23 and 55; 73.3% were employed full-time; 53.1% had not taken a course at Black Hawk College in the last five years; 31.3% were college graduates and 46.9%had some previous college work; and 62.1% indicated that they were taking the course for reasons relating to work and careers.

In addition, 62.8% indicated that they had enrolled in the course in "Study Unlimited" because of time flexibility afforded by the delivery system, and 56.3% responded that they would never have taken the course in a traditional classroom. Furthermore, the course seemed to receive a generally favorable impression from students: 59.4% intend to take additional courses in data processing, and 72.4% intend to take additional courses in "Study Unlimited."

I. INTRODUCTION

"Study Unlimited" is a cooperative program of Black Hawk College, Moline, Illinois; the River Bend Library System, Coal Valley, Illinois; and participating public libraries. Since its beginning in 1975, it has expanded considerably so that it is now located in nine area public libraries, including one outside the River Bend Library System; in the Learning Resource Center at the Rock Island Arsenal to serve military personnel; and in the college's Independent Learning Center on campus. Most college-credit courses available in the program are offered by means of instructional technology: videocassette, film strip, audiocassette, and slides. All courses parallel existing campus-based courses, and most have been designed and are taught by regular full-time faculty at the college. All courses are self-paced and variable-entry.

In January, 1980, DP 100--Introduction to Data Processing--was first made available in "Study Unlimited." This course was introduced both as a result of a number of individual requests made to those working in "Study Unlimited," including those at public libraries participating in the program, and as a result of a more formal survey form completed by all those enrolling in "Study Unlimited" courses. DP 100 in "Study Unlimited" was intended to serve non-majors, especially adults employed full-time who wished to learn more about computers and data processing and for whom enrollment in a traditional class on campus was not a viable alternative.

The availability of DP 100 as a new course in "Study Unlimited" was publicized in the way usual for such course introduction: the distribution of a brochure describing the course at public libraries participating in "Study Unlimited" and through college brochure racks in the community, press releases to daily and weekly

newspapers within the service districts of participating libraries, course posters in "Study Unlimited" libraries, and mention in the "Study Unlimited" newsletter mailed to all students currently enrolled in the program. In addition, brochures and a poster were placed in the computer show at SouthPark shopping mall, Moline, and Gail Rung, course instructor, described the "Study Unlimited" DP 100 course on "Black Hawk College Today," a television show run on local open air and cable television. By July 23, 1980, 49 students had enrolled in the course, an especially large number for a new course.

However, in July, 1980, questions were raised concerning the need for this course in such a non-traditional delivery system, especially since seats were still available in DP 100 courses taught on campus and since difficult financial conditions at the college required improved efficiency in the use of faculty.

As a result, a follow-up study of the 49 students who had thus far enrolled in the "Study Unlimited" section of the course was made to determine the following: (1) such student demographic characteristics as age, employment status, and educational attainment level; (2) the major reason for student enrollment in the course; and (3) the likelihood of enrollment by these students in campus sections of the course.

It was anticipated that students enrolled in DP 100 in "Study Unlimited" would resemble other "Study Unlimited" students in age and employment status, with the majority coming from age groups above those for traditionally-aged college students and employed full-time. It was also expected that quite a number of students would already hold a bachelor's degree and would indicate as their major reason for enrollment in the course their need to learn more about computers and data processing for their work and because of personal interest. It was also expected that, as in similar studies made in the past, students would indicate

that flexibility in time scheduling was their major reason for enrollment in the course in "Study Unlimited" instead of in the traditional classroom. And, because the "Study Unlimited" section of DP 100 was clearly labeled as intended for non-majors, it was anticipated that the majority of students would not intend to take additional courses in data processing.

II. METHODS

1. A simple survey form was prepared with the assistance of the course instructor. A copy of this form is included in Appendix A. Questions 1-4 were intended to determine significant demographic characteristics of the student population: age, employment status, newness as students to Black Hawk College, and level of previous educational attainment. Questions 5 and 6 were intended to determine the students' reason for enrollment in an introductory course in data processing and their reason for enrolling in a section through "Study Unlimited" instead of in the traditional classroom. Question 7 was intended to determine the number of students enrolled who would never have enrolled in the course in a traditional classroom even if they had been free to do so. The purpose of question 8 was, as stated, simply to determine the number from the group who planned to take additional courses in data processing, and, likewise, question 9 was simply to determine the number who liked the "Study Unlimited" delivery system well enough to take additional courses in the program.
2. A letter was written by the teacher to be mailed to each of the 49 students explaining the survey form. A copy of this letter is included in Appendix B. It explained the purpose of the survey and its method and included assurance that all participating would receive a copy of the results and that responses would be used for statistical purposes only.
3. A complete directory roster, including addresses and telephone numbers, for all students who had enrolled in the "Study Unlimited" section of DP 100 from its beginning in January of 1980 to July 23, 1980, was furnished by the admissions office, and each student was assigned a code number as a means of identifying responses in case follow-up was necessary to elicit a sufficient

response rate for meaningful results.

4. By August 7, 1980, all students on this roster, a total of 49, had been mailed a copy of the survey form and the letter from the instructor. Included was a self-addressed, prepaid envelope that carried the code number. The total of 49 students included one student who had dropped the course almost immediately after registration. He/she ultimately returned the survey form with no questions answered and with this explanation. Also included among the 49 students were two who could not be reaching by mail because they had moved and left no forwarding address.
5. By August 21, 33 survey responses had been returned--a total of 67.4% of those distributed. Included within this group of responses was the one mentioned above from the student who had dropped the course almost immediately after registration. A response rate of 67.4% is below that of 70-75% usually considered necessary for meaningful results. However, if one removes from the study group of 49 students the two students who could not be reached by mail, the size of the study group then becomes 47, and the response rate is 70.2%, adequate for significant results. For this reason, further follow-up was not considered to be necessary.
6. Responses were tabulated and percentage rates were calculated for each set of responses. The totals and percentage rates are included in Appendix C.

III. RESULTS

1. The age classification of responders was as follows:

CLASS	NUMBER	PERCENT
16-22	7	21.9
23-35	14	43.8
36-55	8	25.0
56 or above	3	9.4
TOTAL	32	100.1

2. Employment status of responders was as follows:

CLASS	NUMBER	PERCENT
Employed 35 or more hours a week	22	73.3
Employed but not for 35 hours a week	5	16.7
Unemployed, housewife, or retired	3	10.0
TOTAL	30	100.0

3. Newness of the responders to Black Hawk College can be summarized as follows:

CLASS	NUMBER	PERCENT
First course at BHC in 5 years	15	46.9
Not first course at BHC in 5 years	17	53.1
TOTAL	32	100.0

4. Previous educational background of responders can be summarized as follows:

CLASS	NUMBER	PERCENT
Still in high school	1	3.1
A high school graduate only	6	18.8
Some previous college work	15	46.9
A college graduate	10	31.3
TOTAL	32	100.1

5. Major reasons for responders' enrollment in DP 100 in "Study Unlimited" can be summarized as follows:

CLASS	NUMBER	PERCENT
Learn more for job	14	37.8
Learn more for personal interest	9	24.3
Learn more for future career	5	13.5
May major in DP	4	10.8
Other	5	13.5
TOTAL	37	99.9

Some indicated more than one reason in responses. Among those responses under "other," four of the five gave as reasons the requirement of this course in the program in which they were enrolled.

6. Major reasons for enrollment in DP 100 in "Study Unlimited" and not in the traditional classroom can be summarized as follows:

CLASS	NUMBER	PERCENT
Time flexibility	27	62.8
Convenience of off-campus locations	7	16.3
Self-paced aspect of instruction	8	18.6
Other	1	2.3
TOTAL	43	100.0

A number of students checked more than one response to this question.

7. The likelihood of the responders' taking DP 100 in the traditional classroom can be summarized as follows:

CLASS	NUMBER	PERCENT
Would take in classroom	14	43.8
Would not take in classroom	18	56.3
TOTAL	32	100.1

8. The intentions of those responding to enroll in other data processing courses may be summarized as follows:

CLASS	NUMBER	PERCENT
Intend to take other DP courses	19	59.4
Do not intend to do so	13	40.6
TOTAL	32	100.0

9. The intentions of those responding to take other courses in "Study Unlimited" can be summarized as follows:

CLASS	NUMBER	PERCENT
Intend to do so	21	72.4
Do not intend to do so	8	27.6
TOTAL	29	100.0

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In the DP 100 study group, most students were between the ages of 23 and 55(68.8%), clearly older than traditionally-aged college students. In this respect, the DP 100 study group resembles students included in previous studies of the demographic characteristics of those enrolled in "Study Unlimited." These previous studies had demonstrated that "Study Unlimited" students were significantly older than Black Hawk College students in general.[1] Clearly, thus far, DP 100 in "Study Unlimited" has served the population for which, from the point of view of age at least, the program was intended--students older than the traditionally-aged college student.

In the DP 100 study group, most students(73.3%) were employed 35 or more hours per week. This result differs significantly in degree from results in previous studies which had shown a much smaller proportion of students employed full-time(53%).[2] Clearly, thus far, DP 100 in "Study Unlimited" has been exceptionally successful in serving the population for which the program was intended--those employed full-time. Students enrolled in this course also differ significantly in this respect from general Black Hawk College students, only 48% of whom have been found to be employed full-time.[3]

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[1]Mary A. Stevens, The Effectiveness of "Study Unlimited" in Serving New Student Populations in the Community, U.S., Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC Document ED 131 884, November, 1976, p. 31. Also, Mary A. Stevens, A Comparative Demographic Study of Students Enrolled in Library-Based and in Campus-Based Courses at Black Hawk College, U.S., Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC Document ED 154 882, April, 1978, p. 76.

[2]Stevens, A Comparative Demographic Study, p. 84.

[3]Ibid.

Slightly more than one-half(53.1%) of the DP 100 study group had enrolled in a course at Black Hawk College during the last five years. This finding is similar to one in an earlier demographic study, which had suggested that about 46% of the study group was new to Black Hawk College. Still, the findings of both studies suggest that new students are more likely to be found among those enrolled in "Study Unlimited" than in the general college population(41%).[1]

No previous studies of the demographic characteristics of students enrolled in "Study Unlimited" have sampled distribution of students by level of previous educational attainment. Thus, no basis for comparison of data from the present study is available. However, students in the DP 100 study group had far more college work than might be expected for community college students: 31.3% were college graduates and 46.9% had some previous college work.

Previous studies have surveyed the major goals of students enrolled in "Study Unlimited." Most responses have indicated that they are job-related (62%).[2] Similarly, most responders in the DP 100 study group indicated job-related goals for enrollment in the course: to learn more for a present job, 37.8%; to learn more for a future career, 13.5%; and to take a data processing course because of interest in majoring in data processing, presumably for a career, 10.8%. It is important to note that, although the "Study Unlimited" DP 100 course is always clearly labeled as intended for non-majors, still slightly over 10 percent of those enrolling seem to be considering majors in data processing.

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[1] Stevens, A Comparative Demographic Study, p. 95.

[2] Ibid., p. 98.

Major reasons for enrollment in DP 100 in "Study Unlimited" closely resemble answers given by students in previous studies with the majority(62.8%) citing time flexibility as the major reason. The second most frequent reason given was the opportunity provided for the student to work at his/her own pace(18.6%), and the third most frequent, the convenience of off-campus locations for the classwork(16.3%).

Most significant to the purposes of this study was the finding that 56.3% of those in the DP 100 study group would not have taken the course in the traditional classroom. Of course, the survey does not indicate how many of the other 43.8% would have found such a class scheduled conveniently, especially since 62.8% had enrolled in the "Study Unlimited" section because of its time flexibility. Clearly, about one-half of the students who have enrolled in the DP 100 class in "Study Unlimited" thus far would not have occupied empty seats in present classrooms,and, possibly, a number of the other one-half would not have been able to do so because of time conflicts.

Responses to the last two questions on the survey form suggest students' generally favorable reaction to "Study Unlimited" and to the DP 100 course itself: 59.4% intend to go on to take additional courses in data processing, and 72.4% intend to take additional courses in "Study Unlimited." Far more students than anticipated indicated an interest in taking additional courses in data processing, but not necessarily as data processing majors.

In conclusion, results of this study strongly suggest that DP 100 in "Study Unlimited" is successfully serving the students for whom it was intended: older students who are employed full-time, who wish to learn more about computers and data processing for their work, and who would not wish to take the class in the traditional classroom or who are not able to do so.

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Stevens, Mary A., The Effectiveness of "Study Unlimited" in Serving New Student Populations in the Community, U.S., Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC Document ED 131 884, November, 1976.

Stevens, Mary A., A Comparative Demographic Study of Students Enrolled in Library-Based and Campus-Based Courses at Black Hawk College, U.S., Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC Document ED 154 882, April, 1978.

FOLLOW-UP SURVEY OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN DP 100

To provide us with necessary information about the students who have enrolled in DP 100 in Study Unlimited and about the success of the course in serving their needs, we ask that you please complete the following questions and return this survey form in the enclosed, prepaid envelope. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

1. My age is /__/ 16-22, /__/ 23-35, /__/ 35-55, /__/ 56 or above.

2. I am /__/ employed 35 or more hours per week.
   /__/ employed but not working 35 or more hours per week.
   /__/ unemployed, a housewife, or retired.

3. This is my first course in the last 5 years at Black Hawk College.
   /__/ Yes
   /__/ No

4. My previous educational background is
   /__/ Still in high school.
   /__/ A high school graduate (or GED certificate holder) with no previous college work.
   /__/ A high school graduate (or GED certificate holder) with some previous college work.
   /__/ A college graduate (bachelor's degree or above).

5. My major reason for enrolling in DP 100 was
   /__/ Because I thought that I should learn more about data processing for my job.
   /__/ Because I just wanted to learn more about computers because of a personal interest.
   /__/ Because I thought that I should learn more about data processing for the career that I plan to enter upon completion of my college work.
   /__/ Because I plan to or am considering majoring in data processing.
   /__/ Other (please specify) _____.

6. My major reason for enrolling in DP 100 in Study Unlimited and not in a traditional classroom was
   /__/ Flexibility in arranging my own times in classes.
   /__/ Convenience of off-campus locations for class work.
   /__/ Opportunity to work at my own pace.
   /__/ Other (please specify) _____.

7. Had DP 100 not been opened through Study Unlimited, I would have taken the course as it is offered in the traditional classroom.
   /__/ Yes /__/ No

8. I plan to take other courses in data processing.
   /__/ Yes /__/ No

9. I plan to take other courses in Study Unlimited.
   /__/ Yes /__/ No

Please use reverse side to make suggestions on how you think the course could be improved.

Dear

We are very interested in knowing more about the students who have enrolled in DP 100 in Study Unlimited and about whether or not the course has served their needs. This information is necessary for an evaluation of the course now that it has been offered for several months.

Therefore, I am asking you to please complete the simple survey form that is enclosed and to return it to me in the prepaid envelope that is provided. Your response to this survey is extremely important, for, unless 75% of those who have enrolled in the course complete and return this form, the results of the survey will not be valid.

You will note that there is a number written on the top of the prepaid envelop that is enclosed. This is a code number so that we can determine who has returned the survey. Once we have checked in the envelope, we will throw it away and your response will be totally anonymous. We will use this information to follow-up on those who have not responded.

So, would you please take only a few minutes of your time to complete and mail the survey form. Since you may be interested in the results of the survey, we will mail everyone responding a copy of the results and our interpretations of them.

I would also like to urge all of you who have questions about the course or who may not yet have started work on it to give me a call at BHC, 796-1311, Ext. 293. I want to hear from students.

Sincerely,

Gail Rung

Gail Rung

GR/jr

Enc.

APPENDIX C: TOTALS AND RATES
FOLLOW-UP SURVEY OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN DP 100
TOTAL DISTRIBUTED=47 TOTAL RETURNED=33(70.2%) TOTAL UNDILIVERABLE=2

To provide us with necessary information about the students who have enrolled in DP 100 in Study Unlimited and about the success of the course in serving their needs, we ask that you please complete the following questions and return this survey from in the enclosed, prepaid envelope. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

1. My age is /__/ 16-22 7(21.9%), /__/ 23-35 14(43.8%), /__/ 35-55 8(25%), /__/ 56 or above. 3(9.4%) Total Responses 32(100.1%)

2/ I am /__/ employed 35 or more hours per week. 22(73.3%)
/__/ employed but not working 35 or more hours per week. 5(16.7%)
/__/ unemployed, a housewife, or retired. 3(10.0%)
Total Responses 30(100.0%)

3. This is my first course in the last 5 years at Bleck Hawk College.
/__/ Yes 15(46.9)
/__/ No 17(53.1%) Total Responses 32(100.0%)

4. My previous educational background is
/__/ Still in high school. 1(3.1%)
/__/ A high school graduate (or GED certificate holder) with no previous college work. 6(18.8%)
/__/ A high school graduate (or GED certificate holder) with some previous college work. 15(46.9%)
/__/ A college graduate (bachelor's degree or above). 10(31.3%)
Total Responses 32(100.1%)

5. My major reason for enrolling in DP 100 was
/__/ Because I thought that I should learn more about data processing for my job. 14(37.8%)
/__/ Because I just wanted to learn more about computers because if a personal interest, 9(24.3%)
/__/ Because I thought that I should learn more about data processing for the career that I plan to enter upon completion of my college work. 5(13.5%)
/__/ Because I plan to or am considering majoring in data processing. 4(10.8%)
/__/ Other (please specify) 5(13.5%) _____.
Total Responses 37(99.9%)

6. My major reason for enrolling in DP 100 in Study Unlimited and not in a traditional classroom was
/__/ Flexibility in arranging my own times in classes. 27(62.8%)
/__/ Convenience of off-campus locations for class work 7(16.3%)
/__/ Opportunity to work at my own pace. 8(18.6%)
/__/ Other(please specify) 1(2.3%) _____.
Total responses 43(100.0%)

7. Had DP 100 not been opened through Study Unlimited, I would have taken the course as it is offered in the traditional classroom.
/__/ Yes 14(43.8%) /__/ No 18(56.3%) Total Responses 32(100.1%)

8. I plan to take other courses in data processing.
/__/ Yes 19(59.4%) /__/ No 13(40.6%) Total Responses 32(100.0%)

9. I plan to take other courses in Study Unlimited.
/__/ Yes 21(72.4%) /__/ No 8(27.6%) Total Responses 29(100.0%)

Please use reverse side to make suggestions on how you think the course could be improved.

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